

Questions and Answers: Heat Treatment Requirements for Canadian Firewood

Invasive forest pests cause millions of dollars in damage annually to American forest industries, residential property, and public lands. These pests, including the emerald ash borer (EAB), gypsy moth, and Asian longhorned beetle (ALB), are fatal to the trees they infest and have severe environmental impacts on forest ecosystems. Research has identified untreated firewood from foreign countries as one of the primary pathways for the introduction of forest pests to the United States. When firewood is moved from one area to another, any forest pest larvae and pupae inside may continue to develop, until they emerge from the firewood as adults. These pests could move to nearby trees and establish an infestation in a new location.

In 2008, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) established treatment requirements for hardwood firewood entering the country from Canada in order to prevent the introduction of forest pests into the United States. In May 2011, APHIS updated its heat treatment requirements for commercial and noncommercial shipments of hardwood firewood from Canada. In addition, APHIS now requires heat treatment for commercial and noncommercial shipments of softwood firewood from Canada. If shipments of these items are not properly treated or do not have the proper documentation, they will not be allowed entry into the United States. All firewood is subject to inspection at the first port of entry into the United States.

Q. What is the new treatment requirement for Canadian softwood firewood?

A. All commercial and noncommercial shipments of softwood firewood being imported into the United States from Canada must be heat treated at 56 °C for 30 minutes. In addition, commercial shipments of softwood firewood must be accompanied by a

treatment certificate verifying that they have been treated in accordance with APHIS regulations.

Noncommercial shipments of softwood firewood must be accompanied either by a treatment certificate or by an attached commercial treatment label verifying that the firewood was previously treated in accordance with APHIS regulations.

Q. What is the updated treatment requirement for Canadian hardwood firewood?

A. Firewood of all hardwood species from Canada must be heat treated at 60 °C for 60 minutes.

Commercial hardwood firewood shipments must be accompanied by a treatment certificate verifying that they have been treated in accordance with APHIS regulations. Noncommercial shipments of hardwood firewood must be accompanied either by a treatment certificate or by an attached commercial treatment label verifying that the firewood was previously treated in accordance with APHIS regulations.

Q. Why does APHIS require heat treatment? Are there other control measures available for use on firewood?

A. Heat treatment has been shown to be effective against all known insect pests in firewood. Alternate controls, such as debarking or chemical treatments, have not been shown to be effective at killing all forest insect pests. Debarking with half removal, for example, has been shown effective for EAB, but not ALB, infestations. Even when a tree is debarked, wood-boring insects can hide deep inside the tree beyond the effective range of chemical treatments.

Q. How does APHIS define the terms commercial and noncommercial?

A. Commercial firewood is firewood which is cut to be sold to a third party for resale. Noncommercial firewood is firewood cut by an individual for personal use.

Q. If I want to bring firewood from Canada into the United States, how can I ensure that I am in compliance with APHIS regulations?

A. If purchased from a retailer in Canada, the firewood will have a label on the outside that specifies the firewood has been heat treated in accordance with APHIS regulations. Firewood cut by an individual for personal use must be heat treated and accompanied by a treatment certificate.

Q. Why does Canadian firewood need to be heat treated before entering the United States but Canadian logs do not?

A. Canadian logs, except for spruce logs from the province of Nova Scotia, are allowed into the United States for use at specified locations without heat treatment. Each load is shipped to a single location where it is used in a process, such as paper or wood-chip manufacturing. These processes kill any pests residing in the logs.

In comparison, firewood entering the United States goes to many locations and can sit for months or years before being burned. This wide distribution range and long time period would provide ample opportunity for pests to migrate from untreated, imported firewood to local forests.

Q. Where can I go to learn more?

A. For additional information on firewood regulations, please contact the APHIS State Plant Health Director in the nearest State. Contact information for each State is available online at www.aphis.usda.gov/StateOffices/.

To learn more about APHIS' ongoing work to combat the introduction and establishment of forest pests in the United States, go to www.aphis.usda.gov/newsroom/hot_issues/firewood/index.shtml.

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